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In sections one and two of this paper, the value of five administrative practices and attitudes and ten instructional practices and attitudes is questioned. Section three discusses the preparation and continuing education of two-year college English instructors, and section four emphasizes the need for research in composition. (BN)

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Composition in the Two-Year College; or "Nothing So Needs Reforming as Other People's Habits"

Since I have stolen my title from Mark Twain, I shall also borrow one of his techniques, squash it down a bit, and call it an introduction.

Mark Twain--or at least Hal Holbrook in his version of that masterful liar--frequently provided an escape opportunity for his audience, but Twain did a considerable amount of talking before he let anyone avail himself of the escape opportunity. Therefore, I shall try to tell you rather quickly what I am <u>not</u> going to talk about and then try to tell what I am going to talk about. At this point, escape may no longer be mere opportunity; it may be compulsion.

First, a few exclusions. I am not going to comment on the composition sections of the <u>Tempe Report</u>, although parts of it are delightful reading. Consider Mr. Leonard Dean's marvelous definition of the problem at Tempe: "How to get more fun and style into junior college teaching, and thereby get better teaching, which is the heart of the matter."

And I am certainly not going to talk about how I teach writing or about the latest breakthrough at Grossmont College. We have one of those about every other week or so. In fact, the frequency sometimes confuses me so much I can't tell the difference between "through" and "down." This disadvantage might qualify me for a federal program, but I cannot quite make the "youth" requirement. So, enough exclusions.

I propose, first, to play a little game called Five-Ten. Those who frequent the racetracks south of the California border will recognize

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the dangers in this game. I shall wonder aloud at five administrative practices and attitudes that affect composition in the two-year college, and then I shall wonder aloud at ten instructional practices and attitudes that affect composition in the two-year college. It is important to keep one fact firmly in mind: the name of the game is not questions and answers. You may have the answers; I am merely filled with wonder.

The second major subject stems naturally from a very simple assumption: the preparation and continuing education of English teachers is one of the major influences on the teaching of composition. Since this subject is very broad, I shall try to confine my remarks to two subtopics: the graduate schools, preparation and continuing education; research in composition, a dubious proposition.

In conclusion, I shall consider a habit that many of us have, a habit that needs some reforming. So now, avail yourselves of an opportunity, submit to a compulsion, or accept suffering as the inescapable lot of the English teacher.

I. Five Administrative Practices and Attitudes.

I wonder, first, at administrative attitudes toward teaching loads in the junior college. One administrative assumption frequently encountered: the number of student contact hours of an instructor in the social sciences or in health education or in mathematics has something to do with the number of contact hours of an English instructor. Surely the teaching task is not the same in all departments of the curriculum. But somehow or another, many administrators follow the practice that says all instructors should teach approximately the same number of students and that all instructors should be in class approximately the same number of hours.

Suggestion: there is no such thing--from an instructional point of view--as an institution-wide description of teaching load. More than likely load descriptions should come from teachers within departments in the form of statements based on function. Certain functions are necessary for effective English instruction; therefore, certain teaching load conditions are necessary for effective English instruction. "The Workload of a College English Teacher," in the October, 1966, issue of College English, graphically describes both the functions and the load boundaries necessary for the effective teaching of college English.

I wonder, second, at administrative attitudes toward the involvement of faculty members in the formation of school policies and procedures. If the administrator sincerely wants faculty involvement, he cannot expect the instructor to manufacture the time for committee work. The time for committee work is too often stolen from the severely limited personal life of the instructor; or, perhaps even worse, the time for committee work is too often stolen from important instructional tasks.

Third, I wonder at the administrative attitude toward the selection of English teachers. English in the Two-Year College notes that the responsibility for staff recruitment varies from college to college, but that the department chairmen who recruit and select personnel "seem to be in the minority." James Squire, in a dynamic speech to the NCTE Convention in Boston last year, described the differences between prospective teaching candidates being interviewed by administrators and candidates being interviewed by a representative of the English staff. Those differences are important. One wise administrator told me that if he and his staff did a good job of teacher selection and orientation, they had more than earned their money for the

year. This administrator considered the English department chairman as part of his staff.

Fourth, I wonder at the administrative attitude toward orientation of new teaching personnel. Is it really wise to load the initial teaching assignment with remedial courses? Isn't it an instructional necessity to provide the new instructor with an opportunity for extensive discussions with the experienced instructors? The new instructor needs a year-long introduction to the community, to the college, to the department, and to the job of teaching English.

Finally, I wonder at the administrative attitudes toward the process of teaching composition. Do administrators really know how important student-teacher conferences are to successful instruction in composition? Do administrators really understand the impossibility of teaching composition effectively in Evening Division classes that run for three hours? Do administrators really believe that composition is more than mere skill building and that the whole process is really about man and love and pity and hate and compassion?

These attitudinal sets are all influences that bear powerfully on the teaching of composition. We live with these attitudes and practices every day. Are they professionally acceptable to us?

II. Ten Instructional Practices and Attitudes

I wonder, first, at our resistance to large-group instruction and our steadfast cries for smaller classes, followed immediately by the extensive use of the lecture method in transfer composition courses. Lecturing about writing doesn't seem to be too effective. Demonstrating rhetorical principles and practices, appealing to the visual sense as well as to the aural through the use of overhead projection might

engage the student. And these multi-sense appeals can be made effectively in occasional large-group sessions.

Second, I wonder at our insistence that specialization of function has nothing to do with teaching composition. We claim that we are overworked, and yet we are very reluctant to delegate those parts of the instruction process that do not require the special training and talent of the instructor. Everyone knows that seven years in the university is not a prerequisite for typing and other clerical duties; but does anyone <u>really know</u> that it is absolutely necessary for the instructor to read every piece of work produced by every student assigned to his composition classes? Trained readers can be helpful. And does every instructor have to conduct every class session for every student assigned to his composition classes? Carefully selected teaching teams can be effective.

Third, I wonder at our subservient attitude toward the so-called service function of our composition courses. Do students really have to write very much in their other courses? Whose problem is it to pose sensible writing problems in the history course? Whose responsibility is it when the business instructor says that spelling is important but it really doesn't affect the grade? What is lost when a gross insistence on correctness in composition pushes language and literature out of the English classroom?

Fourth, I wonder at our willing eagerness to continue teaching grammar as a substitute for instruction in composition. <u>English in the Two-Year College</u>: "Thus, we see that 99 percent of the responding chairmen think grammar in the remedial course is important to one degree or another." Perhaps it is, but one of the workshops at the CCCC in Denver

concluded that "the naive assumption that good writing (or even improved writing) is a natural consequence of learning grammar must be excoriated." (CCC Journal, October, 1966, p. 180.)

Fifth, I wonder about the practice of placing our students in track programs, defining objectives in each track, and then applying the same grading standards in all the tracks. Has anyone seen a junior college catalog that said an "A" in transfer English meant something different than an "A" in remedial English? Why is it seemingly necessary to assign grades to the students in our remedial and developmental programs? Is this practice based on an educational philosophy, or is this practice based on political and economic expediency? Are we satisfied with whatever rationale we can drum up for our grading practices?

Sixth, I wonder about the reality of our acceptance of language, literature, and composition as a definition of English. Most junior college English programs make specific provisions for the inclusion in certain courses of the work in composition and the work in literature. Where do we find the specific provisions for the work in language?

Seventh, I wonder why we do not examine the assumption that most beginning composition courses should meet three times per week. How many transfer English sessions become mere gestures because the only useful next step would be criticism of the last composition. But--for a variety of reasons--the instructor is not ready to return the compositions. How many remedial English sessions that are needed for laboratory work or for supervised practice do not meet because there have already been three sessions in that particular week. Is three really a holy number?

Eighth, I wonder how many of us nod agreement when we hear that most junior college English instructors need more university course

work in the nature of language and more course work in rhetoric. And then, when we return to the university, we sign up for a course in the minor works of the seventeenth century poets exclusive of Milton.

Ninth, I wonder how many of us fit the pattern described by James Squire in his NCTE Boston speech. We perform brilliantly at nine o'clock with the ten students in the sophomore exposition course for the English major, but we turn into duds when we meet the dullards at eleven.

Finally, I wonder about the image we have of each other. English in the Two-Year College reports opinions held by English teachers about the ideal junior college teacher qualities displayed by colleagues: "just under half made a passing grade or better." Perhaps we judge ourselves too harshly, but it might be interesting to know whether our students would judge us so generously.

Thus endeth the game of five-ten. Perhaps, as in most gambling, we knew all along who the winners would be, but there may be some profit simply as a result of having played the game.

III. Graduate Schools: The Preparation and Continuing Education of Two-Year College English Instructors

One part of the relationship between effective composition instruction and the continuing education of junior college English instructors concerns the graduate schools. Opportunity for further graduate study is an obviously desirable approach to increasing the instructor's store of knowledge about the content of English instruction. However, this opportunity is one of those "iffy" situations: i.e., if certain conditions obtain, then there is an opportunity.

If the graduate schools offer course work based on an analysis of junior college teaching functions, then there is a real opportunity. Despite a call by Tom Merson in Tempe for such an analysis, to my knowledge we have nothing beyond the description report in English in the Two-Year College. This conference should, in my opinion, urge NCTE and CCCC leaders to consider very carefully the long-range impact on English instruction if an analysis of teaching functions is used as a design base for new graduate courses in the teaching of English in the junior college.

Even if it is true that an analytical base for new graduate courses does not exist, we, as a profession, have to face what I think is still a fact. Studies by Dr. Bossone, University of California at Riverside, reveal an understandable but unforgiveable reluctance in university English departments to offer courses in advanced composition, the various grammar systems, and language study in relation to instruction in composition and literature. If the paucity of such courses is indeed a fact, and if the reluctance to create and offer such courses does indeed exist, one might well ask how such discouraging facts came into being and on what grounds they are understandable.

IV. Research in Composition: A Dubious Proposition.

It is quite obvious that one of the reasons for the dearth of courses in the teaching of composition is the absence of knowledge based on research. Since the publication of the NCTE sponsored Research in Written Composition in 1963, we have heard again and again that we need more research. Well, research proposals make interesting reading, and our carefully couched lists of needed research could quite easily paper the sky from Houston to Hawaii to the next conference in Anyplace, USA.

But who is to do the research?

The question of who should conduct research in written composition needs considerable exploration. I have nothing resembling an "answer," but I do have one citation and one suggestion.

Erwin R. Steinberg, in "Tactics and Logistics in Research in the Teaching of English," College English for November, 1965, discusses the problem of research personnel, and he makes a simple, flat statement: "We have no people specifically trained to do research in the teaching of language, literature, and composition." I think Mr. Steinberg's entire essay including this citation deserves careful consideration by university departments of English, psychology, and education.

My suggestion concerns the following question: Why don't we have any people trained in research? I think the answer lies, in part at least, in one word: HABIT. University professors have the habit of conducting research in literature; they have the habit of preparing graduate students to conduct research in literature; they do not have the habit of participating in joint ventures aimed at training graduate students to pursue research in the teaching of language, literature and composition.

Despite some sense of urgency about the absence of research in composition, I see no reason for despair. Mark Twain said, "Habit is habit, and not to be flung out the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time." Well, one hates to quibble with the dead, but I think Mark Twain--for our purposes at least--was moving in the wrong direction. Perhaps we can coax more professors of English upstairs--preferably two at a time--to even greater participation in the preparation of personnel for the exciting task of research in the teaching of language, literature, and composition.

In addition to the absence of research knowledge, I think there is another reason why university professors of English seem reluctant to offer graduate courses in language and composition. Junior college instructors seem reluctant to take the courses. English in the Two-Year College provides considerable information about what junior college teachers say they need to study in graduate courses (linguistics and history of the language), but the study also offers information about which courses--if any--the junior college instructors actually take. I suspect, as the result of an informal, totally unrepresentative, and probably useless survey, that junior college teachers make one of two choices: courses in literature or no courses at all.

Perhaps we junior college teachers also have a habit, the habit of not pursuing the opportunities for professional growth that are open to us. We need more opportunities for advanced study; we need trained research personnel and the information they can give us. But we also need to examine our own prejudices and practices--to re-form our own habits.